

PS

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R55





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Book R55



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THE KNIGHT

OF

THE RUM BOTTLE & CO.

OR, THE

SPEECHMAKERS:

410
541

A MUSICAL FARCE,

IN FIVE ACTS.

—♦—
*Respectfully dedicated to the managers of the New-
York theatre,*

BY THE EDITOR OF
THE CITY-HALL RECORDER.

—♦—
"Nemo me impune lacessit."

NEW-YORK :

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—♦—
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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



The Knight of the Rum Bottle,
A roman soothsayer,
The giant Grumbo,
Lothario,
Field marshal, { *friends to each other,*
Young gentleman, {
Aristides, *a gentleman of the bar,*
Counsellor at law,
Attorney's clerk, *assistant to the knight.*

THE KNIGHT
OF
THE RUM BOTTLE & CO.

A C T I.

SCENE I—*a SOOTHSAYER is discovered with a great number of magical books on a table, and among them the Roman History and Pope's Homer, the latter of which he is perusing—he rises brandishing his clenched fist.*

Sooth. The greatest coward on the lists of fame,
Whom I can find, is *Thersites* by name.
And in my speech, to-morrow, if I can,
I will compare him with that H.....n.
And let me think, for he must have abuse,
Can't I compare him to the roman goose?
No, that won't do—another idea—good!
A direful wolf, who licks his chops with blood.
Blood is one theme, but I'll lay greater stress
On the immortal freedom of the press,
Which will be lost, as I can have no doubt,
If editors must have their brains beat out.
Murder was in his heart! I'll loudly bellow,
And cry, assassin! like a lusty fellow:
And, if the court will suffer, I'll declaim
Loudly against—"a deed without a name."
Nor, in the speech, will I remain at home,
I'll travel, first to Greece; from thence, to Rome.
From thence to London streets I'll bend my way,
Where cockney pugilists despise foul play;

Where, if you give your foe, when down, a banging,
 The mob will leave you at a lamp-post hanging.
 But words are wind, which passeth soon away,
 My matchless speech in print I must display.
 Now for the means—where shall I find a wight
 To whom I may repair when it is night ;
 He whose broad shoulders can sustain, alone,
 A load of other's nonsense with his own ?
 I think of one who'll be a willing tool,
 Though he's a standing theme of ridicule
 For all the bar—but then (*running his fingers in his*
hair) the devil's in't,
 The speech is lost unless it's put in print.
 “I do remember an apothecary,” &c. [exit

SCENE II—a cave strewn over with flaming political
 speeches, of old date, old commissions and turned
 coats—the giant GRUMBO has a long speech writ-
 ten, over which he is coning—he rises with a look
 calculated to draw

“Audience and attention still as night,
 Or summer's noontide air.”

Grum. T will be my part, exclusively, to show
 What these cursed editors have done, should do ;
 This theme will give me license to portray
 The wretch, and drag him to the light of day ;
 “Vengeance is mine,” and that “I will repay.”
 For in my hide he's been a grievous thorn,
 Which often has my turn'd coat badly torn :
 His press my devious course hath oft berated,
 A nuisance vile, which ought to be abated.
 This speech, which I have con'd with so much
 care,
 Ought not to be consign'd to fields of air ;
 I know a wight to whom I will repair. [exit

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

SCENE I—discovers the KNIGHT OF THE RUM BOTTLE in an office, sitting by a table with three law books thereon, odd volumes—a lighted candle almost burnt to the socket—a rum bottle beside him, and in the middle of the floor a nameless vessel, three fourths filled—the floor six inches deep with dirt—and in the room a bed, unmade for six weeks before.

enter SOOTHSAYER, in disguise.

Sooth. Do I disturb thy meditations deep,
Or have I roused thee from thy midnight sleep ?
As far as my own information reaches,
I've learn'd that thou could'st manufacture speeches
Which would reverberate from shore to shore,
Shake fair Wyoming's vale, and make the welkin
 roar !

Knight. Thou flatterest me ; (*hiccups*) I've done
 such things, (*hiccups*) but now
Excuse me, for I feel (*hiccups*) *I dont know how.*

Sooth. What aileth thee ? I fear that thou art
 sick.

Knight. A constitutional disease, (*hiccups*) which
 quick
Will end : (*hiccups*) I'll further talk with you anon.

Sooth. Speak quick ; the glimmering taper's almost gone.

Knight. To Susquehanna's wave I'll waft thy
 name,
Place it on rec—(*hiccups*)—ords of eternal fame :
There's one thing only of you I beseech,
To help me pay the printer—*write thy speech.*
One other thing—(*hiccups*)

Sooth. Already there are two.

(*aside*) Pshaw ! drunk ! (*sticking his fingers in his hair*) I fear that he will never do.

(*at this moment the candle goes suddenly out, and in staggering about to get another, the nameless vessel is turned over by the knight*)

Sooth. What, in the name of goodness, do I feel,
In copious torrents rush against my heel ?

(*knock, knock, knock*)

GRUMBO *enters, and the soothsayer, unperceived, passes him and escapes.*

Grum. (*feeling about in the dark*) " Fee ! faw !
" fum !

" I smell"—what can it be, that's mix'd with rum ?
Zounds ! fire and brimstone ! which I never fear,
It will not do an instant to stay here.

[*he holds his nose, and takes to his heels*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

SCENE I—a court-room is discovered, crowded with spectators—when the trial is about half over, the KNIGHT is seen with a huge bundle of waste paper, trying to seat himself at the table where the counsel engaged are—but, being denied admission, he seats himself exactly where he has no business—an understrapper in an attorney's office, about the time the counsel commence summing up, also seats himself as assistant, and they pretend to write " short-hand."

They sit, and write, and roll their eyes about,
And hear the giant roar and make a rout ;
The roman soothsayer bellow, stamp and rave,
And conjure ghosts of grecians from the grave,
And repeat, six score times, " gentlemen of the
jury,"

And beat and belabor the air like a fury. [*exeunt*]

SCENE II—*discovers the FIELD MARSHAL in a room covered with bundles of newspapers.*

Mar. (solus) Twas bad, twas monstrous bad ;
I'll go no further

In making out that *he* intended murder,
That Haviland and Groesbeck saw the whole :
He struck with fist, *before*, upon my soul.
And then the charge was strong for the defendant :
I must haul in my horns, I may depend on't.

enter the KNIGHT OF THE RUM BOTTLE, with a proof sheet, which he hands to the marshal.

Mar. What's this ?

Knight. A proof sheet of your testimony :
Pray look at it, and see if it's errone-

Ous. (marshal examines it hastily)

Mar. It is wrong in every line and word,
Tis scandalous, ridiculous, absurd.
Why, man, your sentences have no connexion,
Tis all a hotchpotch ; it defies correction.

Knight. The counsel now are writing out their
speeches.

Mar. The counsel ! sure : pray, sir, of them
which is ?

Knight. There's Grumbo and the roman sooth-
sayer

Have both engaged to furnish speeches rare :
Then there's Lothario.

Mar. (interrupting him) Grumbo, did you say ?
Will he write out his speech *entire*, I pray ?

Knight. He said so.

Mar. If he does as he has said,
And you report, I'll break your empty head ;
I'll raise the city, and will storm your castles,
Though stronger than a half a dozen bastiles.

Knight. There's Grumbo, now.

Mar. Let's hear what he will say.

enter GRUMBO.

Shall you write out your speech entire, I pray ?
For if you do, why then I know the course
I must adopt, (*casting his eyes to a pair of holsters
hanging up*) as sure as I'm no horse.

Grumbo. (turns pale and trembles) Field marshal, pray, why do you run so hard on
Your servant, 'fore he speaks ? I ask your pardon.
I hope that in the speech I've not offended :
To point at you, in no part was intended.

Mar. It was ; for you descanted on a cruel thing
'Gainst wives. And then, again you touch'd on
duelling :

What did you mean, by matters of that sort
You spoke of ? now I dare you to report
(looking furiously at both)

That speech entire in manner it was spoken.

Knight. (aside—trembling) I fear that I shall get
my cal'bash broken.

Grumbo. The speech, if any thing's obnoxious
in't,

Can be abridged before it goes to print.
It shall be done ; and nought to public view
Shall be disclosed which hinges ought on you.

Mar. I thank thee, Grumbo : give me now thy
hand,

Let us on terms of *former friendship* stand.
(to the knight)

And now, sir knight, as yours is so erroneous,
I'll write you out my testimony.

[exeunt Grumbo and knight]

Mar. (solus) I almost regret that I engaged to
do any thing in this business. I perceive there is
a scandalous invasion of the right, though *imperfect*,
of an industrious man with some talents, who
several years ago, commenced an original undertaking
in this city, with whose business these *gentlemen*
of the bar are about interfering ; for the knight,
unaided by them, can do nothing. I have

also too, on divers occasions, placed garbled statements of interesting trials, sometimes from hearsay, in the columns of my paper, and I have often endeavored to engage deputy clerks to furnish me reports ; and I have sometimes succeeded. And yet, again, sometimes I have infringed his copy-right by publishing from his book without leave. My conscience tells me all this is utterly wrong. [exit

SCENE III—*discovers the SOOTHSAYER in his room in his shirt sleeves, biting his nails, sweating, pondering, blotting out, and interlining and fixing a long speech.*

enter GRUMBO, LOTHARIO, and ARISTIDES.

Arist. Gentlemen, I perceive the course you are pursuing towards an industrious member of the profession, with whose peculiar relative situation towards us we are all apprized, is unjust and most ungenerous. He came into this city a stranger ; he interfered with no man's business ; he commenced an original undertaking, and has pursued it with perseverance until this time. And the utility of his labors was appreciated by some, or one of you, on the late trial. It is his living. And now will you give countenance, will you aid, abet or assist such a creature as the knight, in making out a report ? will you thus trample on peculiar private rights ? I attended the trial, was neutral between the parties, and am bold to tell you, that it is unpardonable vanity in you, or either of you, to wish your speeches to appear ; for the court excluded all testimony of that to which the greatest part of your philippicks applied.

Grum. Rights ! has not any man a right in court To sit, take down, and publish a report ?

Arist. I do not deny but that he has strictly a le-

gal *right*; but I maintain, that the unnecessary exercise of even a legal right, infringing on *very peculiar imperfect rights*, dearer, perhaps, to the possessor than *legal rights*, is unjust and most ungenerous. Why are laws enacted to secure literary property from invasion? why but to guard rights sacred, but in themselves imperfect?

Loth. I feel it's wrong.

Sooth. I almost think so too.

Grum. But now we've gone so far, what shall we do?

I've finish'd mine.

Sooth. Not quite.

Loth. Mine's not begun,
(*aside*) And if it were, (*laying his hand on his breast*)
it should not meet the sun
In the knight's book.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

A C T IV.

SCENE I—*the curtain rises, and discovers the knight at a table covered with speeches in different hand writings, reading a note—he rolls up his eyes, and looks amazed.*

Knight. (*reads*) 'Sunday morning—sir, I have understood that, under the *influence* of Grumbo's client, you intend to mangle, and mar, and misstate the facts. If you do, and neglect to follow, implicitly, my directions, I shall protest against the report. Beware—take care—how you rear—the

'raging bear—who will tear—for I declare—I will
'not bear—such things—

'From thee, sir knight.

'“By day or night,

'“Or any other light,”

'With thee “I'll fight.”’

(*rolling his eyes strangely*)

I did not expect such a terrible volley,
But appearances now begin to look squally.
There's no other way through this tempest to ride,
Except to join in with the opposite side. [exit

SCENE II—a counsellor's office, a brick building adjoining a large brick house—the counsellor has a client consulting him—finding him busily engaged, the KNIGHT, on entering, begins to address him—but the counsellor takes no notice—in a few moments the client goes out.

Knight. I wanted to say (*hiccups*) that I've made
a report

Of that case which was tried t'other day in the court,
In which you was counsel, and made that great
speech,

Which I fear that no effort of “short-hand” could
reach.

Alas! nought remains, but in mem'ry now floats,
Of that great production, for *I've lost the notes*;
And, there's really no way the ideas to recover,
Unless, my dear colonel, you write your speech
over.

Couns. I write a speech! I never did such a
thing in my life. Besides, I've no ambition that

you should be my trumpeter. I tell you plainly, you're a sot, an imposter.

*Dont come to me about your speeches,
Or else this foot shall reach those breeches.*

[the knight takes to his heels]

enter a YOUNG GENTLEMAN, wearing a cockade.

Y. Gent. What shall I do with that besotted fellow? he is continually haunting me about his report; and says my friend, the marshal, has abused him; and he showed me a reply, wherein the sot seems to disregard the marshal's threats. I shrewdly suspect, indeed he intimated, that he wanted a bribe.

Couns. I tell you what, have nothing to do with him, unless you want a little sport by keeping him drunk. *[exeunt]*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

A C T V.

SCENE I—the KNIGHT discovered in his office, which is filled with huge piles of pamphlets, “taken in short-hand”—he has a large new tin trumpet, fifteen feet long, which he is essaying to blow—on the table is a rum bottle, filled.

enter SOOTHSAYER and GRUMBO.

Knight. Tis done. Your fame to future ages
Will pass, with my immortal pages.
Not Sheridan, nor even Burke,
E'er spoke such speeches as my work
Contains.

Grumbo. Let's hear a specimen
Of that which flow'd forth from thy pen.

Knight. (*reads*) 'Those scenes are past, and I do not revive their recollection to wound the feelings of any man; it is now time, perhaps, that charity, with its mantle of oblivion, should cancel their remembrance for ever.' Sublime!

Soothsayer. (*aside*) A fine mantle, indeed, this must be;

The nymph, doubtless, was airy and gay;
But then, its great use I can't see,
In *canc'ling* remembrance for aye!

Knight. Dear soothsayer, now, if you'll be still,
I'll read you something from your quill.

(*reads*) 'What is about to take place within these walls may form a precedent, bearing with decisive influence upon the mighty question, (1) 'whether our country is henceforth to be the abode of peace or of violence?' (2) 'whether in future the dirk and stiletto, or courts and juries, are to be the arbiters of justice?' ' Sublime!

Grumbo. What mighty question's this? you've stated two;

And why are *dirks* and *daggers* brought to view?
I cannot see their bearing or their sense,
Nor dirk nor dagger was in evidence.

Knight. (*seizing his trumpet*) I do and shall maintain to th' end of time,
That this is grand, and lofty, and sublime.

(*the knight, in trying to make a huge blast with his trumpet, and a rhetorical flourish, adapted to the rapture with which he is inspired, turns over the rum bottle and spills the rum—at the same instant the FIELD MARSHAL enters, sweating under a huge brazen speaking trumpet, thirty feet long, in the trumpet end of which he deliberately fits the blowing end of the knight's trumpet, and fixes the trumpets carefully across the table, running the knight's trumpet about ten feet out of the window---he then applies his mouth---loud blast*)

Mar. I've just read the report, which in "*short-hand*" was taken,
 By that witch of all witches, the great *mr. knight* ;
 Though not free from error, (*blast lowered*) being
 in rum hogshead soaken,
 The speeches are nearly the same as were (*writ-*
 ten—low) spoken.
 And I now, on the word of an editor, state
 The report's interesting, and most accurate.
 There's one sad affair, a very great pity,
 Which with tears should o'erwhelm both the coun-
 try and city ;
 Alas ! by the *loss of his notes** by the knight,
 A *great speech* is strangled ere usher'd to light !

THE END OF THE KNIGHT OF THE RUM BOTTLE.

* It was a fact, known to the field marshal, that the two principal speeches in the report were written and furnished by the respective counsel ; that the first thing stated on the title page ("*taken in short-hand*") was a ridiculous pretence ; and that the gentleman, the notes of whose speech are alleged *to be lost*, very properly refused to write his speech. Here is, therefore, as well a *suggestio falsi*, as a *suppressio veri*. It is a hoax, an imposition on the public, unworthy of an editor of a public journal.

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